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INTRODUCTION TO COMPOSITION by Bogusław Schäffer, translated by Jerzy Zawadski, edited by Stefan Ehrenkreutz and Ludomira Stawowy
Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1976 (£22.00) (distributed in Great Britain by Universal)

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Bogusław Schäffer (b. Lwów, 1929) is one of Poland's most versatile and interesting composers. His compositional work has spanned nearly the full spectrum of 20th-century techniques – from twelve-note writing to aleatoric, graphic, and electronic music. He is, in addition, an eminent teacher and since 1963 has been a professor of composition at the Higher School of Music in Cracow. Schäffer's rich experience both as an internationally known composer and a teacher created a good deal of anticipation when his *Introduction to Composition* first became available in the West. Few well-known composers have written books on composition, and for good reasons: the teaching of composition is usually done on a one-to-one basis between student and composer in a very personalised manner; and codifying the disparate styles, techniques, and philosophies of late-20th-century compositional practice is a Herculean task too daunting for most active composers. But Schäffer has taken time away from his busy schedule to systematise what seems to be his own tutorial approach; the result is a kind of modern *Gradus ad Parnassum*.

Introduction to Music is divided into two books: a text, and a large (nearly 1½ feet long!), 471-page volume of musical examples. The text contains 120 short chapters which discuss various elements of composition: rhythm, linear motion, timbre, serial techniques, textures, and creative composition. Each chapter approaches its subject through the format:

Question	for example 'What is composition? How does it come into being? What is a composition's basis?' (p.7)
Information	This usually consists of Schäffer's ideas on the subject being discussed, though his statements are often presented as if they were universal truths.
Discussion	This section is always provocative. For example 'Having no support in the past, a contemporary composer can imagine the music of the future only with regard to its potentialities. Tomorrow's music ought to be composed by us today!' (p.7), or 'It must be emphasized here that the composer himself, and not the reviewers of music or the audience, is to decide what is good, to decide about aesthetic issues. After all, our artistic taste today has also been moulded by composers, not reviewers.' (p.12)
Exercise	The exercises deal with analysis of the musical examples in the large volume.
Composition	This is the final project in each chapter, in which the student assimilates the previous material in the form of a short composition.

The volume of musical examples uses some 170 excerpts, of which 39 are from Schäffer's work, about half are by well-known composers such as Boulez, Cage, Stockhausen, Stravinsky, and Webern, and the rest are by rather lesser-known figures such as Chou Wen-chung, Betsy Jolas, Goffredo Petrassi, Dieter Schnebel, and Marek Kopelent. Interestingly he takes only two examples from other Polish composers (Barbara Buczkowna and Zbigniew Lampart), and only two from other Eastern European composers (Marek Kopelent and Natko Devčić).

The book is aimed at a rather advanced student of composition and is designed to be used under the supervision of a composer – tutor. Its goals, as expressed by the author, are threefold:

- 1 to show methods of composition from the still difficult and not readily accessible technical aspect,
- 2 to acquaint the reader with individual solutions in the various parameters of music, by means of examples drawn (primarily) from the author's own compositions and the works of those composers who most extensively influenced the metamorphoses of contemporary musical language.
- 3 to awaken and encourage the creative imagination and the capacity for formulating ideas of the apprentice composer. (p.5)

The first thing one notices in reading the text is the awkwardness of the translation. Critics love to carp about translations, but a poor one can obstruct an important point, render meaningless a pithy remark, or totally distract the interested reader by its clumsiness. This translation manages to stumble into most of the pitfalls pretty consistently. Polish is a verbose language and evidently the translator Jerzy Zawadski chose to keep the translation as close as possible to the original syntax – to my mind a big mistake. There is a cultural difference: a text for English readers should be clear, concise, and not obscured by long, awkward sentences; good textbook English does not use all the circumlocutions found in good Polish. For instance, what exactly is 'an authentically intentional way of operating with metric change for the sake of compositional ends of a higher order?' (p.20), and what can be meant by the statement 'Rich results may be obtained even within simple metres by incessantly annihilating their supremacy.'? (p.23) – 'incessantly annihilating their supremacy' sounds more like a line out of *The Life of Genghis Khan* than a text on simple metres. To be fair, Schäffer was aware of the minefield that his technical treatise represented for the translator, and asked three British and American musicians to vet the text. The 'verification of the text from the linguistic and musical point of view' (p.6) was done by Roy Wrightman (England), Adrian Thomas (Northern Ireland), and Stefan Ehrenkreutz (USA), with Ehrenkreutz and Ludomira Stawowy (Poland) as the editors. I find it hard to understand, though, how any native English speakers could let this kind of writing go to print:

Nowadays polymetre may only be regarded as one of the factors of change in material, and the effects it produces (for instance when polymetre is combined with other techniques such as the serialization of other elements) are slight even in respect of the dynamics of movement alone. This notwithstanding, it can be useful as a matrix for rhythmic values for inspirational, if no other, reasons (more interesting co-situations emerge out of a metrically complex groundwork of movement than out of a simple one). (p.23).

Many authors of new texts coin words or phrases that can become a permanent part of the musician's vocabulary, but I am not sure that was Schäffer's purpose with the titles that come out in translation as: 'Automization of Composition', 'Denaturalization of Sound', and 'Selection and Particularization of Tone Colour'. Moreover the average music student would probably have to use a dictionary for words such as 'antinomies' or 'presentiment'; this may not be a bad idea, but in the context they read more like words from a translator's lexicon than efficient tools for making a point. What the book really needs is a good editor to give a second edition the chance to become the textbook it is supposed to be.

Schäffer has done a lot of teaching and his projects are quite interesting. The sections of 'information' and 'discussion' contain a great deal of material, and while there are lots of points that other composers would certainly argue, this is really part of the book's function. Statements like 'Although it has never been emphasised, history proves irrefutably that one of the fundamental canons of true compositional creativity is originality.' (p.11) are highly contentious. Does history really prove this irrefutably? There could be some lively discussion on that point.

In spite of the irksome translation, the book is an important addition to a difficult field. Schäffer is a unique individual and his book is worth the trouble of translating from 'English' into English.